



Living Well

October is National Work and Family Month

OPTIMUM PERFORMANCE REQUIRES LIFE BALANCE

We fall out of balance when our expectations are unrealistic, our support systems are not adequate and communication is ineffective.

Running on Empty?

Organizations such as the US Department of Labor, the Labor Project for Working Families, and the Families and Work Institute confirm what many of us have believed for some time:

- 50% of working women and 35% of working men say they don't have time for their spouses.
- Half of women and 31% of men say they don't spend enough time with their children.
- Companies are downsizing so employees are expected to do more with less and work longer hours.
- Cell phones and email has blurred the distinction between on and off duty.

As a result, many people have a difficult time finding balance between their work and home lives. The warning signs are often ignored or dismissed because they are considered inescapable.

- Feeling out of control or overwhelmed
- Change in sleep habits or appetite
- Feelings of guilt or inadequacy
- Increased alcohol consumption
- Irritability or mood swings
- Preoccupation or difficulty concentrating
- Anxiety, chronic sadness, or depression

What's Driving You?

As a society, we have lost the ability to be still. Technology allows for access to information and levels of connection and responsiveness that were not present a decade ago. This has created a sense of hypervigilance and promotes stress reactions. We have become perpetually ready to jump to action and everything feels like a crisis.

A certain amount of stress creates energy and challenge. Too much of it depletes our ability to concentrate and makes us more irritable. Consider your automobile - step on the gas pedal too hard and for too long, and you'll blow the engine.

Caution: Too Fast For Conditions

Finding balance often begins by asking ourselves "What will it take for me to slow down?" Don't wait until you hit a wall. Identify what you need in life to maintain a clear view of the landscape. For some, that means acknowledging your limits. For others, it requires giving yourself more time to accomplish tasks.

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Take Control of the Wheel

Finding a balance requires making choices. We all makes choices every day – some we think about a great deal, others very little. We often neglect to intentionally look at how we make our choices, or to consider their long-term impact.

Some people make choices based on the path of least resistance. But the “easy” choice can often complicate matters more. For instance, rather than risk making a choice that may create conflict, many people will play it safe or avoid making a decision altogether. Usually, this response eventually requires more work in having to undo the “quick fix,” or having to deal with a different emotional result such as resentment or frustration.

Making life choices is a fluid process – what worked last year, month or week may not work today. By learning to adapt to change and maintaining flexibility, you’ll be able to avoid some bumps in the road.

Chart Your Course

When we encounter challenges, the following process is helpful:

- State the problem
- Set a goal or desired outcome
- Analyze your plan and review it

Switch Gears

Achieving balance is easier for people who:

- Establish realistic and attainable goals
- Determine their own standards
- Establish limits and boundaries
- Learn to be flexible
- Become organized
- Create a support network and locate resources
- Engage in clear and consistent communication
- Develop family rituals and quality family time
- Create time for self care
- Let go of guilt and the “shoulds”

Enjoy the Scenery

Successful balance does not mean we will never have a stressful day. It simply means that we have made a commitment to:

- Balance work and play
- Balance solitude with togetherness
- Balance movement and rest
- Balance belief and doubt
- Balance living in the moment and planning for the future

If you are having difficulty achieving balance in your life, contact SYMMETRY at (414) 256-4800 or (800) 236-7905 for confidential assistance.



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